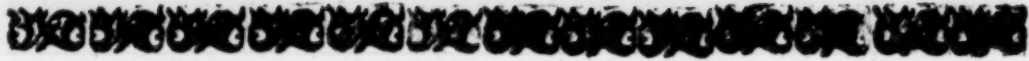


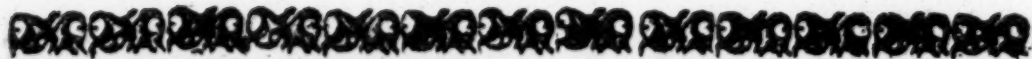
HB

1608/1732.



A
S P E E C H

Made in the
House of Commons, &c.



(Price 6 d.)

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

2

A

SPRUCH

1868

House of Commons

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

(Price 6d.)



A
'S P E E C H

Made in the

House of Commons,

O N

Tuesday the 24th of April 1716.

A T T H E

Second Reading of the *B I L L* for
Enlarging the Time for Continuance
of Parliaments, &c.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. Baker and T. Warner, at the Black-
Boy in Pater-Noster-Row, 1716.

SP ECH

How's of

...

Second ...

...

LONDON

Printed for J. Baker and J. H. ...
By J. ...



A
S P E E C H

Made in the
House of Commons, &c.

TH E House is now enter'd on the Exercise of a Power, which, of Right, and agreeable to the Constitution, belongs to them: I mean that Branch of Power which They, as a Part of the Legislature, have of Repealing Laws, or Extending and Limiting them, in such manner as shall appear to them most conducing to the Service of their Country. As this Right of Altering the Laws does undoubtedly belong to the Legislature, it ought

B

to

to be used with the utmost Regard; since 'tis equally a Crime to enervate Laws that are found to be a Support to our Government, as to omit the Abolishing or Suspending such as have not answer'd their End when made, or which is worse, as have proved detrimental.

It is a commendable Zeal when Gentlemen in their Debates express a Tendernefs for the existing Constitution of their Country, and their Apprehensions of the least Innovation in the Frame of the Government; and I am not surpriz'd that it is Objected, in so popular a manner, That the Passing of this Bill for Suspending the Law for the Election of *Triennial Parliaments*, is to Sap the Foundation of our *English Liberties*.

But if upon an impartial Inquiry it shall appear, That this Bill, which was made for the Benefit of the Nation, has, in no respect, answer'd the purposes for which it was calculated when made into a Law, I presume it may be allow'd, That the Danger in Suspending it, is more imaginary than real.

And



And since it is as unjustifiable to be tenacious of a Matter that has no Argument to support it, as not to give Way to what Experience has demonstrated, if this Bill, should in its Consequences, be void of Proof of its answering the ends for which it was made, I hope it will not be so great a Crime to Suspend it, as it has, with Industry, been represented without Doors.

A principal Argument for Continuing the *Triennial Bill* is, That it is agreeable to the Ancient Laws of this Nation, that there should be frequent Parliaments. I find by the Laws I have look'd over, *That Parliaments ought to be frequently held*: But I found it no where laid down as a fundamental Position of the Nature of this Constitution, That there should be *frequent Elections*. If Gentlemen will look to the Beginning of Parliaments, they will find in the 4th, 5th, and 36th of *Edward III.* That, *For Redress of divers Mischiefs and Grievances which daily hap-*

happen, a Parliament shall be holden every Year, or oftener if need be. Let it then be consider'd in what manner those Parliaments were held: When a King met his Parliament, they used to sit Ten or Twenty Days, and then were Prorogued or Dissolv'd; And there were frequent Intermissions of Parliaments, none being call'd for several Years. By looking over the Journals, we find the Prorogations and Dissolutions of Parliaments.

To come down to the Time of *Henry VIII.* few of his Parliaments sat more than Twenty Days, tho' there was not a Parliament met every Year; and from the 7th to the 25th of *Henry VIII.* there are no Journals, and consequently we cannot tell in what manner Parliaments were held. Afterwards, there were several Parliaments, but not every year, to the end of his Reign.

A Parliament was call'd the 1st year of *Edward VI.* and in Five Years sat but
Four

Four Months. In *Philip* and *Mary* there were Four Parliaments, but the Sessions extreamly short. From the 2d to the 5th, and from the 7th to the 13th of Queen *Elizabeth*, no Parliament met, and from the 14th to the 28th of *Elizabeth*, the Parliament sat only from the 8th of *May* to the 30th of *June*; and Four Years after, from the 8th of *February*, to the 8th of *March* following; and in Eight Years after, never sat to do Business, but were then Dissolv'd. There were Six other Parliaments call'd in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time; but never sat long, unless That in the 39th of Her Reign, which sat Four Months.

The Parliament the first of *James I.* sat about Four Months, and in Three Years after, sat about Eight Days. That Parliament was not Dissolv'd till the 9th of *James*, but sat twice or thrice only. There were three other Parliaments in his Reign, but they met very seldom.

The Sessions in King *Charles I.* were much shorter than of late Days, and very frequent Prorogations; And in the 16th of his Reign, an Act was pass'd, *For Preventing Inconveniencies by long Intermission of Parliaments*; by which it was provided, That a Parliament should meet every three Years; which Law we find Repeal'd in the 16th of *Charles II.* by Reason that the Provisions in the former Law, were look'd upon as a *Derogation to His Majesty's just and undoubted Prerogative for Calling and Assembling Parliaments*, and might be an Occasion of manifold *Mischiefs*, and might endanger the *P E A C E* of his People. The said Act is Repealed, and a Provision made therein, That *because by the ancient Laws of this Realm, in the Reign of Edward III. Parliaments are to be held very often, the sitting and holding of Parliaments shall not be intermitted above Three Years.* In this King's Reign the Long Parliament was held; and whatever Corruptions they were tainted with, they could never

ver be accused of favouring the Cause of *France*, or attempting to enslave their own Country.

In King *James II.* that unfortunate Prince, a Parliament was held in *May* 1685. and sat above two Months, and was at several Times Prorogued to *November* 1687. Then the *Happy Revolution* took Place, and in the *Bill of Rights*, 1 *Guliel. & Mariæ*, it is Declared and Enacted, That *all the Rights and Liberties Asserted and Claimed in the said Declaration, are the true, ancient, and indubitable Rights and Liberties of the People of this Kingdom, and ought to be firmly and strictly holden and observ'd.* And in the same Bill, among that long Catalogue of Grievances which precede the said Declaration, there is not the least mention made of Want of frequent *Elections*, but only *That Parliaments ought to be free.* In the Sixth of King *William*, this now favour'd Bill for *Triennial Parliaments* was pass'd; and upon this occasion I cannot help observing, that it is some-
satis-

Satisfaction, that the People Abroad, who look upon the Reign of that Prince as a *Usurpation*, should be fond of any one Act that was pass'd in that Time; And I hope from hence, they may in Time be more reconciled to the Protestant Succession, which is in Consequence of that *Happy Revolution*.

If Gentlemen will look over the *Writs* of Summons, and the *Returns* to those Writs, they will find no mention how long any Parliament is to last; But the Return makes mention of the Persons who are to serve in the Parliament that is to meet and be held at such a Time at *Westminster*. But it must be allow'd, that the Parliament is subject to the *Triennial Act* while it subsists; and therefore the *Advantages* or *Inconveniencies* of that Law ought chiefly to be consider'd in the matter now before Us: And in Case an Act be found prejudicial, if such a Veneration is to be paid to a Law as not to alter it, from

from any Conviction of its being insufficient, or attended with the Consequences, I think the *Legislature* will become, in a manner *useless*. I take the Principal Matter to be, to examine what Benefit has accrued to the Nation by Virtue of this Bill; and if the *Inconveniencies* do not outweigh all the *Advantages*?

It is pretended, that by *Triennial Elections* the People have an Opportunity of laying aside those Persons with whose Behaviour in Parliament they are dissatisfied, or such whom they apprehend to be under Court-Influences: I desire it may be consider'd, how very few Examples there are, of Persons who having accepted Places, have not been re-elected. The Reason is very obvious: Because the People who love Expences, judge that a Man who has a Place of Profit, is much more capable of making an Expence, than he that has none. But supposing any Gentleman so wickedly disposed as to sacrifice his Opinion to the Lucre of a Place, does not such a Person

D

who

who has spent Five or Six Hundred Pounds at his Election, and his Circumstances not very able to bear it, come more prepared for a Court Temptation, than if he had enjoy'd his Seat in Parliament, and been free from the Trouble and Expence of frequent Elections? I appeal to Gentlemen, if Expences are not increased? And if any Instance can be produced where they are abated, many more may be, where they are increased; so that the End of the Bill, in this Respect, is no ways answer'd.

It is said, that Expences being Voluntary, it is the Fault only of those who make them; But when we observe the Contagion of Expences to be universally spread in the Kingdom at the Time of Elections, and a Dissolution of Manners occasion'd by such Expences, it is time for the Legislature to interpose, and prevent the dangerous Consequences of such an Evil. Do, Gentlemen, consider the Distractions occasion'd by Elections,

ctions, and the Impossibility, considering the small Interval of Elections, to heal up those Wounds which the Animosities of Parties have occasion'd; so that 'tis little better than living in a continual state of Warfare. This is a no less fatal than undeniable Consequence of this Bill, which was calculated for the Ease of the Subject.

It's said, the Reason of this *Expedient*, as it is call'd, is because *the Majority* of this Parliament are *Whiggs*: And tho' 'tis allow'd that this Parliament has acted for the Service of his Majesty and the Nation, the Proceedings of the last Parliament are said to be as meritorious of the King's good Opinion, and the Nation's, as what this Parliament has done.

It is much insisted on, That the *Tories* gave the *Civil List*: That is true; But had they not given it, I believe the King would not long have been depriv'd of it. 'Tis said the King was received here with the Universal Joy of his People:

ple: Why did that Satisfaction cease so soon? Has the King done any thing to lose the Affection of so many of his People? Or have his Ministers? If his Ministers, Why has the Spirit of *Patriotism* been so much wanting in Gentlemen, as not to represent to the King, or in this House, the Crimes of those he employs in his Service? But if no real Handle for these Discontents has been given, by King or Ministers, then those who pretended such a Zeal for the King and his Service, at his Arrival here, acted a hypocritical Part, and meant nothing less than what they now make Professions of. Let us consider the present Situation of the Minds of the People, how exasperated one Set of them are at the necessary Prosecutions of those, who so fatally concerted the Ruin of their Country; and to what degree that restless Spirit influenced the People in the late Rebellion; and how industriously a *false and mistaken Cause* of the *Church*, has been of late propagated in this Nation.

From

From these and many other Circumstances of Affairs, and Symptoms of the ill Temper of the Nation, I think the Disposition of the People's Minds far from being suitable to the Business of an *Election*, but rather for a Restoration of that Person, who the deluded People have been taught has alone a Right to the Crown, and came to free you from the Oppressions you now lye under.

S I R,

So much has been said concerning the Preparations which the Regent is making, by extorting vast Sums from the Subjects of *France*, and so much has been spoken concerning our Alliances, and the necessity of applying our selves to find out effectual Methods for discharging the *Publick Debts*, that after so long a Debate, I shall not trouble you with my Thoughts upon those Subjects.

It must be allow'd, that the Nation has Obligation to those Patriots who
E fram'd

fram'd this Law with a View and Expectation it would prove a secure Provision for the Liberty and Ease of the Subject : But could those Great and Honest Men have foreseen into what a degenerate State this Nation would fall, they would have been convinc'd how insufficient, and *Cobweb* a Remedy such a Bill must prove ; and they would scarce have been content with leaving to Posterity a Legacy which Experience has shewn to be Destructive, instead of any real Advantage to them.

I humbly apprehend, that when Laws do not answer their End, or prove prejudicial in their Consequences, 'tis the Duty of the Legislature to interpose, and that the Suspension of this Bill is so far from being a Violation of our Constitution, that it is the healing a Breach made in the Constitution, by those who obtain'd this Law.

The

The Reasons why I am now for the BILL are,

I. To dispose the People to follow their Callings, and to be Industrious, by taking from them for a Time, the opportunity of distracting one another by Elections.

II. To prevent such who have the WILL, from the POWER of giving any new Disturbance to the Government.

III. To prevent another *Rebellion*; there being just as much Reason to expect one this Year, as there was the last.

IV. To check that evil Spirit in those who have sworn to the King, and rose in Arms against him, or abetted such who have.

V. To Discountenance that Spirit which lately did so far prevail in this Nation, as to approve of a most ignominious Conclusion of a successful War, by a ruinous Peace.

VI. To render fruitless any concerted Project of the Regent, or any other Foreign
reign

reign Princes, to disturb this Nation at a Time when Elections, or the Approach of them, have rais'd a Ferment in the Minds of the People;

VII. And to procure to the Clergy an Interval from being Politicians, that they may be the better able to take Care of their Flocks, in the manner the Scripture has prescrib'd.

For these and many other Reasons, too long to enumerate at this time, I am for the **Commitment of this Bill.**

F I N I S.



